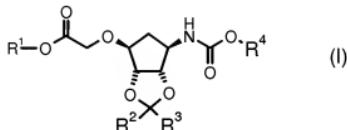


**In the Claims:**

The current status of all claims is listed below and supercedes all previous lists of claims.

Please amend claims 3-17, and add new claims 18-20 as follows.

1. (original) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (I):



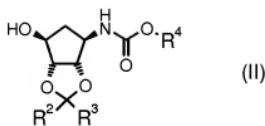
wherein

R<sup>1</sup> is C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl;

R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are, independently, C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl; and

R<sup>4</sup> is C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl or benzyl (wherein the phenyl ring of benzyl is optionally substituted by nitro, S(O)<sub>2</sub>(C<sub>1-4</sub> alkyl), cyano, C<sub>1-4</sub> alkyl, C<sub>1-4</sub> alkoxy, C(O)(C<sub>1-4</sub> alkyl), N(C<sub>1-6</sub> alkyl)<sub>2</sub>, CF<sub>3</sub> or OCF<sub>3</sub>);

the process comprising reacting a compound of formula (II):



wherein R<sup>2</sup>, R<sup>3</sup> and R<sup>4</sup> are as defined above, with a suitable base; and

reacting the product so formed with R<sup>1</sup>OC(O)CH<sub>2</sub>X, wherein R<sup>1</sup> is as defined above and X is chloro, bromo or iodo;

wherein the process is carried out in a suitable solvent at a temperature in the range -40°C to -5°C; and wherein at least 0.2 moles of the compound of formula (II) are used in the process.

2. (original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein R<sup>1</sup>, R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are independently selected from C<sub>1-4</sub> alkyl.

3. (currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein R<sup>1</sup> is ethyl.
4. (currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, 2 or 3 wherein R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are methyl.
5. (currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, 2, 3 or 4 wherein R<sup>4</sup> is benzyl optionally substituted by C<sub>1-4</sub> alkyl.
6. (currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 wherein R<sup>4</sup> is unsubstituted benzyl.
7. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 6 claim 1 wherein X is bromo.
8. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7 claim 1 wherein the base is an alkyl metal C<sub>1-6</sub> alkoxide.
9. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8 claim 1 wherein the base is potassium tert-butoxide.
10. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 9 claim 1 wherein the molar ratio of suitable base: R<sup>1</sup>O<sub>2</sub>CCH<sub>2</sub>X : compound of formula (II) is (1 to 1.3):(1 to 1.3):1.
11. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 10 claim 1 wherein the molar ratio of suitable base: R<sup>1</sup>O<sub>2</sub>CCH<sub>2</sub>X : compound of formula (II) is (1.1 to 1.3):(1.1 to 1.3):1.
12. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 11 claim 1 wherein the molar ratio of suitable base: R<sup>1</sup>O<sub>2</sub>CCH<sub>2</sub>X : compound of formula (II) is 1.2:1.2:1.

13. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 12 claim 1 wherein the solvent is selected from a cyclic ether, an aliphatic ethers ether and an aromatic solvent.

14. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 13 claim 1 wherein the solvent is selected from tetrahydrofuran, diethyl ether, diisopropyl ether, methyl tert-butyl ether, benzene, toluene and xylene; and a mixture of two or more of said solvents.

15. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 14 claim 1 wherein the solvent is tetrahydrofuran.

16. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 15 claim 1 wherein the temperature is in the range -30°C to -10°C.

17. (currently amended) A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 16 claim 1 wherein the temperature is in the range -25°C to -15°C.

18. (new) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein:

R<sup>1</sup> is ethyl;

R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup> are methyl;

R<sup>4</sup> is unsubstituted benzyl;

X is bromo; and

the base is potassium tert-butoxide.

19. (new) A process as claimed in claim 18 wherein the molar ratio of suitable base:

R<sup>1</sup>O<sub>2</sub>CCH<sub>2</sub>X : compound of formula (II) is 1.2:1.2:1, and wherein the solvent is selected from tetrahydrofuran, diethyl ether, diisopropyl ether, methyl tert-butyl ether, benzene, toluene and xylene, or a mixture of two or more of said solvents.

20. (new) A process as claimed in claim 19 wherein the the temperature is in the range -25°C to -15°C.